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Ballade of Liberty

and Other Patriotic Verses



BY
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Ballade of Liberty

SHE came unseen upon the ship Mayflower;
The Continentals conjured her from space;
How luminous, how kind her eyes of power;
Her smile gave Union army heart of grace.
Great is her might, for she is of one race
With Thought, Infinity, and the Most High.
See to it that a guard shall now draw nigh.
Themselves they honor who her right uphold.
Americans! Are we to hear the cry:
"Is *that* the Goddess Liberty blindfold?"

Her eyes! Proud thoughts of Freedom for their dower,
Strength of vast sky where no winds interlace,
And pity for the souls that cringe and cower,
All those in bonds of narrow thought or place,
Beyond compassion of the Night's embrace.
That takes the tired half-world to lullaby,
With balm of sleep beguiles its pain and sigh,
Or shows, for toys, wide tracts of stars of gold,
Americans! Beware! Wait not the cry:
"Is *that* the Goddess Liberty blindfold?"

Her stately beauty deepens every hour,

Let no rude hand her guardianship disgrace!

Longed for through ages and their perfect flower,

Is there a shadow falling on her face?

The heights of Air are hers, and Earth at base

Where the unfathomed depths of ocean lie.

If she should ever turn from us to fly

How then would all her virtues be extolled!

Americans! Shall she give smothered cry:

"Is that the Goddess Liberty *blindfold*?"

ENVOY

Americans! What if stern ghosts came by?

Amazement, sorrow, wrath, in every eye;

Our heroes, slain to leave us uncontrolled;

How could we bear their bitter anguished cry:

"Is that the Goddess Liberty blindfold?"

Read at the municipal celebration of the Fourth of July in
San Francisco, 1889.

The Voice of California

Soulless I lay,
Though mine the reach of redwoods star communing,
And might of snowy mountains that affray.
Long importuning,
The insolent, persistent sea
Roared, pushed and vainly questioned me.
The ages passed me like the tossing spray,—
I had no yesterday.

I did not mark
The rush of trampling rain and wind reviling,
Nor thrill of dread that touched athwart the dark
From fell moon smiling;
Knew not of hour nor place nor man,
Still blank in the Eternal Plan.
Fresh star might flame or old go out like spark,
For me a rayless arc.

I could not fear
The brutal sunshine's grasp, so fiercely holding,
Nor fog, like Silence taken shape, drawn near,
Closely blindfolding.
I, unaware, with the huge world,
Still on, through space mysterious hurled,
To ride the heavens, or to disappear,—
Wind, Darkness, only, near.

Tumult and glare!
Volcano, earthquake, or the Hour befalling?
From outer gloom I entered crystal air,
Heard ocean calling,
Saw cloudland mocking billowy tide,
My loneliness descried.
Though of my savage beauty half aware,
I felt but vague despair.

My fit ally
The grizzly, that the Indian calls undying,
Stood over me and looked into my eye
Of firm replying.
I saw my monstrous vulture swoop
Above the wolves in hurrying troop
Behind a plunging bison herd gone by,
Then but great empty sky.

I raised my head,
Beheld red shaman making incantation,
An old man Elemental Powers had bred
To change creation;
He turned to bird or dog, or deer,
Could go and come or disappear.
Grim, painted warriors round a great fire led
Weird dance where shadows sped.

On elbow then,
And watching gulls their stout wings long uplifting,
I spied a junk with friar Buddhists ten,
Pass wrecked and drifting.
Long after came a caravel;
I saw the sailors meet, rebel,
And Cortez singly, unawed even then,
Face his mad, cursing men!

I sat upright:
The peace was mine of olive orchards spreading;
Of thick, green branches gleaming yellow light,
Ere globed fruit shedding;
Of vines that, bubbling grapes, foretell
The beaded wine of cheery spell;
Of browsing sheep in meadows without blight;
And cattle bells at night.

Chant, taper, prayer;
Great roses Mission gardens overflowing,
With lilies of Saint Joseph clustered there,
Like pale dawn showing;
Soft chime unfolding flowers of sound,
That breathing, wreathing, floated round,
Enthralling, calling, falling through the air,
With saints' names everywhere.

Naught was to rue.
In chaparral not hiding, seeking, running,
My tufted quail went pertly strutting through,
No thicket shunning.
The Yaqui diver brought up pearl
Watched but by surges' crest and curl;
My magic glass of atmosphere, strong, true,
Gave him far scenes to view.

Drawn to my knee,
There came disputing voices, weapons glistened,
Where to guitar and castanet in glee,
I late had listened.
Before I knew, I saw o'er me
The mighty flag of Liberty,
Fit for my half-barbaric realm of sea
And land untrodden, free.

There comfort lies,
Illuminated missal page sent flying,
In red and white and blue it testifies,
Heart satisfying,
Brief line of David's psalm, with stress:
No more shall man of earth oppress!
Like bow of promise after rainy skies,
It gladdens all men's eyes.

Erect I stood,
Amid my yellow poppies nodding, hinting
 "Ah! Gold is a chimera!" as they shewed
 Massed sunshine glinting;
 No ore could fashion their fair cup,
 Nor riches stay its withering up.
Yet now my mountain passes' solitude
 Heard ring of steel intrude.

A throng of men!
The rule of priest had changed to that of layman,
 Who roving, rifling far ravine and glen,
 Seemed spell of shaman,
 With brutes in human guise, in swarm,
 Were men that death need not transform.
Absorbed I watched them, till, to my dazed ken,
 My spirit strengthened then.

I found man's soul
Has tragic grandeur of vast gorges lonely,
 Deeper than echoes of the world may roll,
 And mist-veiled only;
 Impulsive dash and cry and flight
 Of cascade glimpsing heavenly height;
Is strong as immemorial pine's stern bole,
 Weak as spent wind's control.

A soul in me
Traced in the universe no limitation;
A trend toward Central Force of mystery,
Whose veiled vibration
Through Nature and through Man we know
As Love, and Truth, and Beauty's glow,
Behold through interchanging of these three
Eternal Unity.

Thus I discerned
The big sea-lion on my shore reposing,
The little ant beneath my wood leaves turned,
A heart disclosing;
From moon and tide, the hush of night,
The stir and song at morning light,
And through men's souls when hidden linking
burned,
Of Sympathy I learned.

I faced the east,
One hand above my eyes for earnest gazing:
Afar, aloft, a tiny speck increased,—
The noon was blazing,—
I watched it surely drawing nigh,
In wide curves sweeping through the sky,
And every year I pause, my thought to feast
On joy that has not ceased.

O happy tryst!
To meet the Day I stood my arms upraising
In yearning loveliness where naught is missed.
I hear all praising,
My breath is balm, my veins run gold,
My pride is—sister hearts enfold,
Our Eagle, circling with calm eyes sun-kissed,
Alighted on my wrist!

Read at the celebration of Admission Day by California at
the Chicago Fair, 1893.

“Old Glory!”*

(Chant Royal)

Enchanted web! A picture in the air,
 Drifted to us from out the distance blue,
From shadowy ancestors through whose brave care
 We live in magic of a dream come true.
With Covenanters' blue, as if were glassed
In dewy flower-heart the stars that passed;
 O blood-veined blossom that can never blight!
 The Declaration, like a sacred rite,
Is in each star and stripe declamatory,
 The Constitution thou shalt long recite,
Our hallowed, eloquent, beloved “Old Glory!”

O symphony in red, white, blue! fanfare
 Of trumpet, roll of drum, forever new
Reverberations of the Bell, that bear
 Its tones of Liberty the wide world through!
In battle dreaded like a cyclone blast!
Symbol of land and people unsurpassed,
 Thy brilliant day shall never have a night.
 On foreign shore no pomp so grand a sight,
No face so friendly, naught consolatory
 Like glimpse of lofty spar with thee bedight,
Our hallowed, eloquent, beloved “Old Glory!”

* “Old Glory!” as our flag was baptized by our soldiers during the Rebellion.—PREBLE.

Thou art the one Flag, an embodied prayer,
 One, highest and most perfect to review,
 Without one nothing; it is lineal, square,
 Has properties of all the numbers, too,
 Cube, solid, square root, root of root, best classed
 It for his Essence the Creator cast.

For purity are thy six stripes of white,
 This number circular and endless quite,
 Six times, well knows the scholar wan and hoary,
 His compass, spanning circle, can alight,—
 Our hallowed, eloquent, beloved "Old Glory!"

Boldly thy seven lines of scarlet flare;
 As when o'er old centurion it blew.
 (Red is the trumpet's tone, it means to dare!)

God favored seven when creation grew:
 The seven planets, seven hues contrast;
 The seven metals, seven days, not last
 The seven tones of marvelous delight
 That lend the listening soul their wings for flight;
 But why complete the happy category
 That gives thy thirteen stripes their charm and
 might?
 Our hallowed, eloquent, beloved "Old Glory!"

In thy dear colors honored everywhere,
The great and mystic ternion we view;
Faith, Hope and Charity are numbered there,
And the three nails the Crucifixion knew.
Three are offended when one has trespassed,
God and one's neighbor and one's self aghast.
Christ's deity, and soul, and manhood's height;
The Father, Son and Ghost may here unite,
With texts like these, divinely monitory,
What wonder that thou conquerest in fight,
Our hallowed, eloquent, beloved "Old Glory!"

ENVOY

O blessed Flag! sign of our precious Past,
Triumphant Present and our Future vast,
Beyond starred blue and bars of sunset bright
Lead us to higher realm of Equal Right!
Float on in ever lovely allegory,
Kin to the eagle and the wind and light,
Our hallowed, eloquent, beloved "Old Glory!"

The first prize is awarded to your noble Invocation to the Flag in the *Pilot* competition.

I enclose a check for one hundred dollars.

I congratulate you on having added a great poem to the permanent literature of America.

JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY.

It should be known everywhere.

INA COOLBRITH.

As ray by ray some distant star discloses
Its virgin splendor in a sky forlorn,
As when a new breath stirs among the roses
And one new miracle, a flower, is born,
So, line by sounding line, I heard thy song,
Royally chanted, spread vestigial wings,
That grew to mighty pinions, sweep along
Till it became a harmony of kings.
Thus Fame shall rive thy song from thee and make
Thy name a handmaid to it—ruthless Fame,
With harp strings fibred out of hearts—shall take
Thy song and sing it into notes of flame;
Such music Michael's angels heard afar,
Tremendous legions treading to a star.

EDWIN COOLIDGE.

A magnificent chant royal, a most difficult form of composition.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

A wild heart poet, with her "Old Glory," her "Driftwood Fire," and many other poems that flash with color and crash with music.

EDWIN MARKHAM.

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